

CLAIMS

1. A method of manufacturing a workpiece that includes a connection between a male connector and a female connector, said method comprising:

providing a tab attached to one of said male connector and said female connector and removable following making of the connection, said tab including a computer-readable code;

loading the workpiece into a workstation;

connecting the male connector and the female connector to complete the connection removing the tab from the connection; and

presenting the tab to a computer to identify the computer-readable code to verify the connection;

said method further comprising issuing an alert when a command to release the workpiece from the workstation is received and the computer-readable code has not been identified.

2. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the tab is attached to the female connector and includes tangs that are deformed by the male connector to allow removal of the tab.

3. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the workstation includes a release mechanism that is controlled by the computer, and wherein the alert includes a failure to release the workpiece in response to the command.

4. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the alert comprises actuation of a sound or light.

5. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the alert comprises a report to allow the workpiece to be subsequently identified.

6. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the code is a bar code, and the computer includes a scanner for reading a bar code.

7. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the code comprises alphanumeric symbols, and the computer comprises an imaging device.

8. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the code is a magnetic code, and the computer comprises a magnetic code reader.

9. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the code corresponds to a serial number that identifies the connector.

10. A method for manufacturing a fuel tank for an automotive vehicle comprising a shell defining an interior and an opening, and component mounted within the interior remote from the opening, said component comprising a female connector, said method comprising:

providing a tab attached to the female connector, and removable following connection to a male connector, said tab having a computer-readable code;

loading the shell into a workstation having a release mechanism controlled by a computer;

while loaded into the workstation connecting a male connector to the female connector to complete a connection;

removing the tab from the connection;

presenting the tab to the computer to identify the computer-readable code and verify the connection; and

releasing the fuel tank from the workstation only after verification of the connection by the computer.

11. A method in accordance with claim 10 wherein the computer-readable code is a bar code, and the computer comprises a scanner for reading a bar code.

12. A method in accordance with claim 10 wherein the computer-readable code is a serial number of the component.

13. A method in accordance with claim 10 wherein the component is a vent valve, and the fuel tank comprises a vent line that includes the male connector.

14. A method in accordance with claim 10 wherein the component is a vent line having one of said female connector and said male connector, and the fuel tank comprises a flange adapted to seal the opening and include the other of said female connector and male connector.